

freedom

NO TURNING BACK
WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 20

This weekend, we learned that sickness is not necessarily a sign of sin, and that it is important that we have a balanced biblical view of healing and sickness—both for our own lives, and for our life as a church overall.

PAUSE

Take a few moments to rest in God's presence and focus your heart on Him. As you begin this study, reflect on the words of this Psalm and ask God to give you confidence in His strength despite any weakness or trials you are currently facing.

*You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me into glory.
Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.*

Psalm 73:24-26

CONNECT

ICEBREAKER: What is one book, other than the Bible, that has made a big impact on your life?

STUDY

1. This weekend we learned that *Sickness ... Is Not A Sign Of Sin*.

- a. As you reflect on your journey with God, how has your view of supernatural healing changed, evolved, or developed?
- b. How have you experienced God's supernatural healing in your life, or witnessed it in the life of someone you're close to? If so, what was that experience like?
- c. How have you or a loved one experienced significant pain, suffering, or sickness that God has not healed?

- How has your faith been challenged through that experience?

2. Throughout history, it has been common for many to link human suffering with sin or divine punishment. Here are several examples from God's Word. Read each passage, and then answer the questions below.

- **Acts 28:1-6**

- **Job 4:7-8**

- **Job 8:3-7**

- **Job 22:4-11**

- a. In **Acts 28**, Paul is bitten by a deadly snake right after he survives a harrowing shipwreck. How did the islanders respond when they saw him bitten by the snake? How did they respond after he was not harmed?
- b. In the book of Job, we know (from the opening chapter) that Job's suffering and misfortunes are not the result of his own sin. But his friends who meet with him do not know this. What is their view about why he is suffering so much?
- c. Have you ever held such a view, or can you think of any views in our modern culture that are similar?
- d. Why do you think we naturally tend to think this way at times?

3. Sickness, pain, and suffering are a part of the fallen world and not necessarily a sign of sin or judgment from God.

Read the following passages:

- **John 9:1-3**

- **Romans 5:3-5**

- **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

- **Revelation 21:4**

- a. In **John 9**, Jesus' disciples assume the man is blind because someone sinned. How does Jesus correct their wrong assumption?
- b. In **Romans 5:3**, Paul says that we "glory in our sufferings." Why?
- c. How have you seen God glorified through your own sickness, pain, or suffering, or through the sickness, pain, or suffering of someone close to you?

d. In **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**, Paul says he does not lose heart even though outwardly he is “*wasting away*.” Why?

e. **Revelation 21** tells us, one day, God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Similarly, Paul in **2 Corinthians** “fixes his eyes” on the “eternal glory” that is coming. How does the hope of Christ’s return give perspective to suffering and pain?

RESPOND

As you wrap up the study, think through your own life right now. Are you experiencing any significant pain or suffering? If so, bring your suffering to Him. In times of suffering, our emotions often range from settled and peaceful to anxious and afraid. We know God *can* heal, and yet sometimes He chooses to help us endure the suffering instead of delivering us out of the suffering. Sometimes, this journey can be extremely painful and leave us feeling alone, abandoned, or forgotten.

1 Peter 5:7 says, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

Take a moment now for an honest heart-to-heart with God. Bring your cares, worries, suffering, and pain to lay at His feet. Ask Him to strengthen your trust in Him, in His goodness, and in His ultimate plan for your life.

TOPICAL PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of each Life Group. Often those who are new to a Life Group are intimidated by praying aloud if they have never done it before. Others are so comfortable with prayer that they can take over the prayer time without meaning to. For these reasons, we suggest practicing topical prayer to help your group get comfortable praying together. Here are three basic guidelines:

1. Focus on a Single Topic/Request at a Time

Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request. Once a topic is introduced, one or two members pray for that request. Then the Life Group Leader will direct the prayer time by sharing the next topic/request.

2. Pray Several Times Together

By focusing on one topic at a time, each member has an opportunity to pray at different times for the requests they are most passionate about.

3. Keep Requests/Prayers Short and Simple

By keeping both requests and prayers short and simple, everyone has a chance to share and pray. This helps those who are new to prayer feel more comfortable praying. It also helps everyone stay focused during your time of prayer together.